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Tribute to the Late John B. Powell

REMARKS
OF
HON. FORREST C. DONNELL
OF MISSOURI
AND
HON. JAMES P. KEM
OF MISSOURI
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES
Monday, March 10, 1947

Mr. DONNELL. Mr. President, the remarks which I am about to make are submitted on behalf of my colleague the junior Senator from Missouri [Mr. KEM] and for myself.

On February 28, 1947, at a luncheon meeting of Missouri University Alumni held in Washington, D. C., the guest of honor voiced the view that there is no need for us to fight Russia in the near future, if at all, if we take advantage of our common friendship and common grounds. He presented also the proposition that the Pacific Islands that form a protective screen for America should never be relinquished. He set forth the fact that there are three ideologies at work in Asia, namely, communism, imperialism, and the American democratic idea, and expressed the view that what happens to China, India, to a billion people, will depend on the attitude and action of the United States. He expressed the hope that our national leadership has the intelligence to maintain our position in the Orient, and will exercise that intelligence in the years to come. He further declared that events in Asia will be of supreme importance in the future. The words of the speaker were based upon a wealth of knowledge which he possessed from a quarter of a century spent in the Far East.

Startlingly soon after the conclusion of his address, and while yet seated at the head table of the luncheon meeting, he whose words had just been uttered collapsed. Within a few moments he had passed to "the undiscover'd country from whose bourn no traveller returns."

The speaker was John B. Powell, Missouri born, graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, newspaper man in Hannibal, Mo., for 3 years, instructor for 4 years at the university of which he was a son, and subsequently editor, foreign correspondent, and author. In 1917, Mr. Powell became connected with Millard's Far Eastern Review in Shanghai, China. Subsequently he bought the publication and changed its name to China Weekly Review. He was editor and publisher of it at the time of his death, having served in those capacities for many years, though his son, J. W. Powell, had been its managing editor since the resumption of publication in 1945 following the war. The publication had been suspended since Pearl Harbor. Among the products of the authorship of John B. Powell is the work entitled "My Twenty-five Years in China."

In his career in the Far East Mr. Powell was notably distinguished by his clear perception of the designs of Japan upon China and by his courageous and persistent warning to the world that the Japanese possessed such intentions. In an editorial entitled "He Being Dead Yet Speaketh," the Kansas City Times said:

> As managing editor of the China Weekly Review at Shanghai, John Powell early showed a real understanding of Chinese character and a comprehension of Japanese plans to establish an overlordship in China. For many years he was a voice crying in the wilderness, warning his countrymen against the danger of the conflict he so clearly saw impending.

The St. Louis Globe-Democrat said of him:

> He was one of the first who saw the menace of Japanese aggression and was outspoken in his condemnation.

The New York Times declared:

> Soon convinced that Japan intended to swallow China, he made it his mission to warn the world. Threats, bribe offers, and bombing never swerved him.

The Louisville, Ky., Courier-Journal said:

> John Powell's voice in the China press was just one man's, but it kept crying in the wilderness of the Orient, crying out against Japanese aggression.

His outspoken, daring, and repeated announcement to the world, of the plans of Japan, caused it to be likely that he would be a victim of the hatred and cruelty of that empire. The likelihood was to become a certainty. Less than 2 weeks after Pearl Harbor he was incarcerated by the Japanese in Bridgehouse prison which at once aroused in him the thought of the Black Hole of Calcutta. In this prison he spent 7 months. He experienced the loss of two-fifths of his weight and the freezing and gangrene of his feet. Ultimately, as a result of his prison experience he suffered the loss of one foot and much of the other. As he spoke to his fellow alumni on the day of his death he stood on crutches and artificial feet.

The Washington Post said that he "wrote with clarity and pungency, but his prime virtue was courage." Continuing, the Post said:

> A man of some means, he could have left the Far East when the overrunning of China by the Japanese was foreseen by most China hands, let alone an acute observer like Powell. But he stuck to his post.

The Washington Evening Star pointed out that after the Japanese moved into Manchuria in September 1931, "every agency of the Jap Government joined in a concerted effort to remove Mr. Powell from the Orient." Continuing the Star article reads:

> His publications were denied postal privileges. His cable messages were mercilessly slashed by Jap censors and he was showered with threatening letters.
>
> Nevertheless, the fighting editor wrote a series of stories for the Chicago Tribune dealing with Japan's preparations for war in 1934 and 1935.

Mr. Powell died among University of Missouri alumni. It was appropriate that it was among them that his final message was delivered, for he possessed an abiding affection for his alma mater. His courageous and steadfast adherence to duty vividly brings to our minds the words from a song of that great university:

> Old Missouri, fair Missouri, dear old varsity,
> Ours are hearts that fondly love thee,
> Here's a health to thee.
> Proud art thou in classic beauty
> Of thy noble past,
> With thy watchwords, honor, duty.
> They high fame shall last.

Mr. President, although a copy of the remarks made by Mr. Powell as the concluding public message of his life does not exist, there has been reconstructed from notes and recollections a statement which is thought to be a close approximation of what he said on that notable occasion. I ask unanimous consent that, at the conclusion of my remarks, that statement be set forth in full.

There being no objection, the statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of Mr. DONNELL's remarks.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. DONNELL. I also ask unanimous consent that following the statement just mentioned there may be set forth the following editorials from the Wash-

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ington Post; the Louisville Courier Journal; the Kansas City Times; the St. Louis Globe-Democrat; the New York Times; the China Daily News (Shanghai), March 3, 1947; the China Press (Shanghai), March 2, 1947.

There being no objection the editorials were ordered to be printed in the RECORD.

(See exhibit 2.)

Mr. DONNELL. Mr. President, to his surviving widow, his son, his daughter—Mrs. Martha Hensley, his brother, sisters and friends, may there come consolation from the beautiful words of the paragraph with which is concluded the editorial, just mentioned, from the China Press of Shanghai:

May the earth lie softly above your head J. B. This is the beginning of a long sleep. But your work will be carried on. For you make truth nobler—a more fearless thing. And as long as truth will survive so too will your memory.

EXHIBIT 1

TALK BY JOHN B. POWELL, DISTINGUISHED EDITOR AND AUTHOR, ON FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS TO UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI ALUMNI, AT SHERATON HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D. C., FEBRUARY 28, 1947

Mr. Chairman (Clark Nichols, Missouri, '06), fellow alumni, and guests, I have come here today, at the invitation of your chairman and of my classmate, Roy Miller (Missouri, '10), who has introduced me so extravagantly, to talk to you of something of the significance of events in the Far East. To do that I will comment from my long-time experiences there, dating back to 1917.

(NOTE.—John B. Powell had been presented to the University of Missouri alumni as the "most apt to be known from the Yukon's frosty peaks to Rio's Corcovado and in the bazars of far Cathay as well as here in the old U. S. A.)

(A notice by Clark Nichols, president of the Washington, D. C., branch of the University of Missouri Alumni Association, in announcing the speaking date said, "This modest little man, whom everyone stood to honor at the luncheon in honor of Senator JAMES P. KEM on January 30, has become, because of his long years of service in China as managing editor of the China Weekly Review and correspondent for the Chicago Tribune, his dodging of Japanese assassins, his services as war correspondent, and as author of My Twenty-five Years in China and other books on the Far East, as the University of Missouri's most famed graduate of this era.)

Reference has been made to My Twenty-five Years in China, and it has been said that I am most familiar with affairs in China. What I am really most familiar with at the present time is plastic surgery. At present, I am becoming accustomed to my new feet, one of them courtesy the Press Club, and the other courtesy the Army.

I am especially glad today to see here two longtime friends, James R. Young of the International News Service and Morris J. Harris (Missouri '25) of the Associated Press. We share a like distinction in that all three of us have served in Japanese jails. In my own case, I was thrown into Bridgehouse prison by the Japanese on December 20, 1941.

In historic retrospect, I want to emphasize the importance of China, and the Far East, to the United States economically, in the past as well as for the future. Although the United States fought largely in the Pacific, as a Nation we know less about the Far East than in the days of the clipper ships. After the American Revolution, our trade and commerce with China and the Far East, brought this country out of an economic depression.

For an illustration, it was not uncommon of New England sea captains to cut a shipload of ice in the winter season, and sell it in the Far East, and in China. As a historical landmark to such trading, there is an Icehouse Street in Hong Kong today.

China is in much the same position as we were a century ago. She will eventually regain her outlying possessions, as we won the West. Primarily it is a case of transportation. It was not until we extended our railroads to the Coast that we could be sure of our land. We built the railroads, at terrible cost, but if we had not, the Pacific Coast would not have been ours, but would have been British and Spanish, and perhaps Russian.

For the next decades China with only 10,000 miles of railroads, against our 260,000 in a smaller country, will have to extend her communications—then Manchuria, Mongolia, and Sinkiang—a territory in itself large as the United States, will be restored to her.

There are three ideologists at work in Asia—communism, imperialism, and the American democratic idea. What happens to China. India, to a billion people * * * will depend on the attitude and action of the United States.

Shall we be left in a world with more than a billion hostile people against our quarter million in the Western Hemisphere?

Once when there was a presidential election we got a cable, through the same channel, "Harding leading in early returns."

There will be later reports. I told the English owner of the paper. He wanted to know why there should be. I told him that the States are far-flung, and that reports trickle in gradually till the election was no longer in doubt.

"Do you mean they wait for reports from the interior?" he asked.

"Yes, from the varicus States, Missouri, for instance."

"Missouri?" replied the boss, "Missouri, is that one of the Indian reservations?"

As for Missourians, you see them everywhere, at home and abroad. I well remember one visit to Dallas, where there are more Missourians than Texans.

At a gathering of Missouri alumni, such as this one, someone had prepared a long list of illustrious Missourians. After the list was read, someone else pointed out a noted omission, of a man who had influenced business, railroads, and economics, perhaps more than almost any other.

When no one could supply the name of this man, he who had called attention to the omission finally said Jesse James.

In a discussion of far-eastern affairs today, my mind turns back to 1921. At that time, after 3 years as Chicago Tribune correspondent in China, I was back in this country. I called on my boss, Col. Robert R. McCormick, then as now the editor and publisher of the Tribune.

He asked me if there was anything I especially wanted to do, and I replied that I wanted to interview Warren Gamaliel Harding, then newly elected President, but still at his home, at Marion, Ohio. He arranged for me to call on President-elect Harding at Marion for the interview. At his Marion home, President Harding invited him there on a number of occasions.

It was one of my assignments to cover the Disarmament Conference, with Charles Evans Hughes presiding, when discussion of the Pacific problem was high on the agenda. Today, we are still making peace in the Pacific after World War II.

I was forcibly reminded of this when in Tokyo recently for the war crimes trials. A young attorney on the staff, from Kansas City—I believe his name was Brooks—was discussing far eastern problems. He said that the more he studied the situation today and compared it with his historical knowledge of the developments after World War I, that he was impressed that "the situation has not changed much—only the actors have changed." I have reflected many times since on the fundamental soundness of that judgment.

In the Far East three major political areas are concerned. These include Siberia, a second Canada; Manchuria, Outer and Inner Mongolia, comparable to our Minnesota or Iowa; and China proper. Additionally, there is India.

Our best prospect for future trade is in India, but in order to take full advantage of that market we must maintain the position we hold today in China.

Russia has been in Siberia for three centuries without scratching the surface there. Only in the past 10 or 12 years is Russia building some factories there, for purposes unknown to us.

It was always interesting to ride the trains in Siberia, where the forests grew up so close they scratched the sides of the cars, and it was a common saying it was a battle between man and the trees, and the trees winning. Newsprint is a problem with us today, but there is enough newsprint in Siberia to supply all the papers in the world for a long, long time to come.

It has been stated that Russia has never been successfully invaded, but I remember that we had one division of troops in Siberia at the end of World War I that went everywhere they needed to go. And I can recall Charles Evans Hughes pounding the deck at the 1921 Disarmament Conference to require the Japanese troops there to withdraw.

It had been agreed among the Allied Powers that each would send a division of troops into Siberia as an occupation force, and we had sent our usual division of about 10,000 men, while the Japanese division was 70,000 strong. If we had not run them out, when Charles Evans Hughes cracked down at the Disarmament Conference, they undoubtedly would have stayed on and be there today.

Lesser areas of importance are Korea, the Philippines, Malaya, and the Netherland East Indies.

The Far East is so big you can have a war in one part of it, and the people in another part will not know anything about it.

I once heard Fiorello H. LaGuardia, when mayor of New York, make an address to a group where he was in his element and whose language he spoke—the garment makers. He told them "you had better quit playing pinochle or those fellas in Los Angeles and San Francisco will take your business away from you." In the Far East that holds true for us today.

In the past, we have looked to Europe for significant events. This is largely because of our own background, and roots. We have ignored Asia. We ignore it today in the schools. I remember well, before going to China, how difficult it was to find anything comprehensive and authentic in the schools and libraries, and the situation has not improved much today.

In our country, the Republicans are in control of Congress, as they were in 1921. At that time, after World War I, we wrecked our fighting forces. We thought we could avoid war by throwing away the means of fighting.

The Republicans are in control in our Houses of Congress again today. They have the same responsibility for basic foreign policy decisions that will determine our course and future, and I sincerely hope they, and the Nation have learned something by our experience of the past 25 years.

The Pacific islands, that form a protective screen for America should never be relinquished. We could have purchased them for

$5,000,000 from Spain after the close of our war with Spain, but we did not want them.

They were subsequently sold to Germany, which owned them until 1914, when the Japs took them. Now, I can not think of any circumstances, or combination of circumstances, that could cause us to give them up to any nation.

I read in the papers that Russia will not question our control of the Pacific isles. I wonder that Russia, or any other nation, would even think of questioning our control.

The papers have been saying, too, that Lt. Gen. John R. Hodge, our military Governor in Korea, is surprised to find the Russians training a half million Koreans today, but that is no surprise to me, for the Russians were training Koreans at Valdivostok when I was there in 1931.

I hope today that our Nation has increased its vision, and accepts its responsibilities more intelligently than we did 25 years ago. There is no need for a war with Russia unless we scrap our fighting services, and withdraw within ourselves, as we did in the 20's.

Any war fought against Russia would be fought in Siberia, and the atom bomb would be of no use to us in Siberia, in striking at its remote areas and sections, but the atom bomb, used by Russia against us, could do enormous damage by hitting at our population centers and industrial areas. There is no need for us to fight Russia, however, in the near future or at all, if we take advantage of our common friendship and common grounds.

The Orient has been placed on our doorstep, and our national leadership should have the intelligence to maintain our position there. I hope that it has, and exercises that intelligence in the years to come.

After World War I the Far East looked to Europe for trade, commerce and dominance. Today it looks to the United States for the trade and commerce it got before from Europe.

For in the years to come, and particularly in the next half century, we must cease to regard developments in Europe as of first importance. Developments in Asia will be of more importance. Events in Asia will be of supreme importance in the future.

EXHIBIT 2

[From the Washington Post]

JOHN B. POWELL

The dramatic death of John Benjamin Powell after a speech he had just delivered to a Washington gathering of his friends will be mourned by newspapermen in America and Asia. Powell was an ornament to the calling of journalism. It was, indeed, a calling to him, not a business or even a profession. Trained at the School of Journalism in his native State of Missouri, he soon after went to China, and bought the China Weekly Review, in which for 20 years he exposed the machinations of militaristic Japan in China. He wrote with clarity and pungency, but his prime virtue was courage. A man of some means, he could have left the Far East when the overrunning of China by the Japanese was foreseen by most China hands, let alone an acute observer like Powell. But he stuck to his post. Inevitably he was thrown into a concentration camp as soon as the Japanese captured Shanghai, and his sufferings were so harrowing that, on his repatriation, his feet were so gangrenous that they had to be amputated. A slight man even in health, he was a mere shadow when he came home, but he had won a moral stature that his colleagues, including the members of the National Press Club, delighted to acknowledge. For months he had been bedridden at Walter Reed Hospital, but his spirit never flagged, nor his interest in world, particularly Far Eastern, affairs. A letter from his pen appearing in our columns as recently as Monday warned Congress against sinking into the same apathy which found us unprepared in the Pacific in 1941. A shining knight of the pen was John B. Powell, and his life and work will be an inspiration to the neophytes of his craft.

[From the Louisville (Ky.) Courier-Journal]

A NEWSPAPERMAN WHO TRIED TO WARN US

John Powell's voice in the China Press was just one man's but it kept crying in the wilderness of the Orient, crying out against Japanese aggression. But from the time of the Manchurian invasion in 1931 until the day of Pearl Harbor a decade later, nobody in the United States listened.

An agent of the pro-Japanese Nanking regime threw a grenade at John Powell one day in October 1941, as he walked the streets of Shanghai. And when the war came, the Japanese quickly captured and imprisoned him. He lived through tortures. But he lost part of each foot from gangrenous infection and starvation. He was an ill man in August 1942, when he was repatriated.

Since then Americans have been more willing to listen to his voice. He was in Washington Friday night telling some of them why United States must keep strong in the Far East, how the occupation of Japan must be long continued. And it was the last warning he ever gave us, because when he sat down at the speakers' table he died of a heart attack. What he had said, of course, was just one man's opinion. But it was the opinion of a man who realized what was happening long before the rest of us did, and who knew what he was talking about. His last warning ought to be heard and understood.

[From the Kansas City Times]

HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH

John B. Powell was a pioneer in that series of fine young newspapermen sent out to the Orient from the University of Missouri School of Journalism under the leadership of the revered Walter Williams. These men made a deep impression on journalism in Japan and China and helped make the university at Columbia a center of interest in current Oriental affairs.

As managing editor of the China Weekly Review at Shanghai, John Powell early showed a real understanding of Chinese character and a comprehension of Japanese plans to establish an overlordship in China. For many years he was a voice crying in the wilderness, warning his countrymen against the danger of the conflict he so clearly saw impending.

The fiery American editor was a thorn in the side of the Japanese. They did everything possible to suppress him. He lived under constant threat of assassination. But attempts at intimidation and glittering offers to buy his newspaper were alike futile. It took courage to maintain his position in Shanghai in the face of the coming storm and Powell paid the penalty in his brutal imprisonment after Pearl Harbor.

When he finally was exchanged and returned to the United States on the *Gripsholm* he was in for a long period of invalidism and his address was listed in Who's Who as Harkness Pavilion, Presbyterian Hospital, New York. While he was able at last to leave the hospital he remained partly crippled and his exhausted heart eventually gave way.

John Powell left a great legacy to his alma mater and to his profession. He is one of that noble company of whose members it may be said, "He being dead, yet speaketh."

[From the St. Louis Globe-Democrat]

A FIGHTING EDITOR

Death came unexpectedly last week for a heroic Missourian. Addressing a meeting in Washington of University of Missouri alumni, John B. Powell, fighting editor of the China Weekly Review, collapsed and died just as he finished his speech. It was, we believe, as he would have preferred it, for the university, of which he was an alumnus and a former faculty member, always held a strong place in his affection.

"J. B.," as he was known throughout the Orient, was an editor who never pulled his punches. He was one of the first who saw the menace of Japanese aggression and was outspoken in his condemnation. He was one of the first Americans marked for arrest after Pearl Harbor and the hardships he suffered in a Japanese prison camp necessitated the amputation of both feet. Last summer he had recovered sufficiently to return to the Far East and testify in the Japanese atrocity trials, but undoubtedly his prison treatment hastened his death.

Newspapermen around the world salute his memory as that of a fighting editor who literally gave his life to print the truth as he saw it.

[From the New York Times]

J. B. POWELL

John B. Powell, hobbling painfully about on his crutches, never thought of himself as a hero. But Japanese hatred and stubborn American courage raised him inevitably to heroic stature. He died as he lived, fighting to the end for his convictions.

Powell, a small-town Missouri editor, went to China in 1917 to run a newspaper there. For a score of years he did run it against hell and high water. Soon convinced that Japan intended to swallow China, he made it his mission to warn the world. Threats, bribe offers and bombing never swerved him. From 1931 on he was high on the Japanese black list. After Pearl Harbor they had their revenge. Flung into Shanghai's notorious Bridge House Prison, his captors froze him, starved and kept him sitting cross-legged in Japanese fashion until beri-beri gangrene began eating away his feet. When he was freed and brought home his feet were gone, but his heart was high.

Three years of operations to restore the use of his legs did not daunt him. From an invalid's cot he threw himself into the fight for a free China, free of the Communist threat as it was finally freed of the Japanese menace. It was with a plea for our strong and unrelaxing vigilance in the Far East still on his lips that his tired heart failed him at last. No civilian in our history ever fought more stanchly for his country or against greater odds. This Nation can best honor his memory by holding as steadfastly to its high principles as he did.

[From the China Daily News, Shanghai, March 3, 1947]

J. B. POWELL

So J. B. Powell is dead. There is not the slightest doubt that his demise at the early age of 59 was largely brought about by suffering he was subjected to by the notorious Japanese gendarmerie in the Bridge House immediately at the outbreak of the Pacific War. He has been an outspoken critic of Japan's aggressions in China—but J. B. managed to hit home against the Japanese with such frequence and telling effect that he was regarded by the Japanese as their number one enemy amongst the foreign journalists. It's a matter of little concern now whether it's always possible to agree with everything which the able journalist wrote, but opportunity must be availed to emphasize how true a friend he was of China and how fearlessly he espoused her cause. It may be truly said Powell has given his life for his friends—the Chinese. They and all his colleagues no matter their nationality

will regret his passing though there is consolation in the fact that Powell by residence and work in this country made richer through sympathy and understanding which he displayed. There can be devout certainty, as the greatest of all editors passes upon his work, it will be with well deserved commendation.

[From the China Press, Shanghai, March 2, 1947]

FRIEND OF CHINA PASSES

United States and China—and journalistic cirlces around the world—are emptier places today for J. B. Powell has written 30. And he wrote it the way all of his many friends and colleagues wherever they may be will be proud of. He wrote it while "still in the saddle" despite the loss of both legs in the course he helped to make for the cause for more than half of mankind.

We humbly bow in the presence of the Great Maker. Little there is to say of J. B that his great deeds have not already said for him, little truth there is to utter that he has not already made known, to his very last breath. J. B. paid the price for his outspoken, fearless attacks against Japanese aggression. And in paying the price, he was paying it not only for China, not only for the United States, but for all freedom-loving peoples.

In these days of difficulties between the United States and China both peoples should recall the memory of J. B. His was only a journalist's pen. But that pen gave him credentials of an ambassador. China will not forget.

May the earth lie softly above your head, J. B. This is the beginning of a long sleep. But your work will be carried on. For you make truth nobler—a more fearless thing. And as long as truth will survive, so too will your memory.

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